

MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee (Formerly Known as the Transfer Appeal Committee)

- 1. Procedures for dealing with appeals by research students to the Committee against a decision by their department not to transfer their registration from MPhil to PhD**

<p>This procedure applies to students who entered the College prior to the introduction of direct PhD entry ¹</p>

2. General

- 2.1. Prior to the introduction of direct PhD entry (see footnote below), students on research degree programmes, normally, registered initially for an MPhil.
- 2.2. For these students, an assessment of the students' research ability to decide whether registration shall be transferred from MPhil to PhD is determined by a transfer examination, normally held early in the second year and no later than 18 months after the date of initial registration for the MPhil (or pro rata for part-time students). All students are required to submit a written transfer report, normally of 20-40 pages, on the work to date on which they will be given a viva by at least one assessor in addition to, or other than, the supervisor.
- 2.3. The purpose of the transfer examination is to confirm that the student:
 - a. Understands the problem;
 - b. Is aware of the associated literature;
 - c. Has demonstrated capability to conduct the research;
 - d. Has a realistic research plan and schedule; AND
 - e. Is of PhD calibre.
- 2.4. If transfer to PhD registration is recommended, this will be backdated to the start date of MPhil registration. Where transfer is not recommended a student is not debarred from submitting for a further transfer in due course, although in cases of dispute a student may appeal to the MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee.

¹ Direct PhD entry was introduced for all students in the Departments of Chemical Engineering; Chemistry; Civil and Environmental Engineering; Earth Science and Engineering; Life Sciences; Materials; Mechanical Engineering; Medicine; Physics; Imperial College Business School; Institute of Clinical Sciences; National Heart and Lung Institute; and School of Public Health on 1st October 2010 and for all other students on 1st January 2011.

3. Grounds for Appeal

- 3.1. An appeal against a decision not to transfer registration from MPhil to PhD should be made in writing to the Academic Registrar within one month of that decision being communicated to the student.
- 3.2. Any appeal should set out the grounds on which it is based which may be one or more of the following:-
 - a. Administrative error of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the result of the examination would have been the same had the circumstances not arisen;
 - b. Evidence of bias on the part of one or more of the assessors such that the result of the examination should not be allowed to stand;
 - c. Evidence of inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the assessors such that the result of the examination should not be allowed to stand; or
 - d. Extenuating circumstances affecting the student's performance at the transfer examination of which the Department was unaware and that these had produced an unfair result.

4. Appeal Procedure

- 4.1. The Head of Department is asked to consider the appeal, in consultation with the Director of Postgraduate Studies and Postgraduate Tutor and, if acceptable, either to transfer the student's registration to PhD or to schedule a fresh transfer examination within two months. If the Head of Department is not prepared to agree to either course of action the matter is referred to the Vice Provost (Education).
- 4.2. The Vice Provost (Education), in consultation with the Director of Student Support and Academic Registrar, may dismiss an appeal on the basis of the candidate's submission alone, without a hearing being held and without seeking further information, where in his/her opinion the application does not fall within the remit in paragraph 3.2 above or does not disclose arguable grounds.
- 4.3. If the Vice Provost (Education) does not dismiss the appeal under the terms of Paragraph 4.2, s/he may determine that the matter is referred to the MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee.
- 4.4. The MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee comprises the College Consuls.
- 4.5. The College Consuls shall determine which three of their number shall convene to hear the student's appeal and shall elect one of the three to chair the appeal hearing. The Academic Registrar shall appoint a member of the Registry to serve as Clerk to the MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee.

- 4.6. The student will be invited to attend the Appeal Committee and the Head of Department will be invited to send a representative to the hearing. Students may, if they wish, be accompanied by a member of Imperial College (either a fellow student, or a personal tutor, or other member of the academic staff); the friend may speak in support of the student if the latter so desires. In keeping with the Human Rights Act (1998), students may, if they wish, request that the hearing be held in public.
- 4.7. Written statements will be required from the Head of Department as follows:
 - a. A report on the transfer examination(s) clarifying the reasons underlying the decision not to transfer the student's registration to PhD;
 - b. A copy of the student's transfer report;
 - c. Copies of the 6 monthly reports completed by student and supervisor on the student's progress; and
 - d. Copies of any other relevant correspondence relating to the student's research progress to date.
- 4.7.1. These statements will be sent to the student at least one week before the hearing.
- 4.8. The conduct of the MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee will be standardised as far as possible (see section: "Conduct of MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee"). Both the student and the departmental representative (if attending) will be before the committee at the same time; the Chair will explain that the Committee is only empowered to hear an appeal based on one or more of the grounds set out in paragraph 3.2 and supported by evidence of those grounds. The student will be invited to present their case, with department representative being permitted to put questions; following which the representative will then make a statement of the departmental view, with the student permitted to put questions. Finally, the student will be invited to make any further comments they wish; after which the student and 'friend' (if present) and departmental representative will withdraw, before the MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee consider the matter.
- 4.9. The MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee shall take one of the following decisions:
 - a. To reject the appeal, in which case the result of the original examination stands;
 - b. To request the examiners to reconsider their decision. The examiners shall normally be expected to hold another oral examination before reaching a decision as to whether the result should be changed;
 - c. to determine that the original examination be cancelled and that a new examination be conducted. The new examination shall where possible be

conducted by examiners who did not take part in the original examination and were not involved in the appeal.

- 4.10. The Clerk to the Appeal Committee will write to the appellant within ten working days of the hearing taking place, informing him/her of the Committee's decision, and providing reasons for the judgement reached in relation to submissions made at the hearing.
- 4.11. The responsibility for hearing and deciding upon appeals is vested in the Senate delegated by the Senate to the MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee, whose decisions are final.
- 4.12. A formal report on all decisions of the Transfer Appeal Committee is made to the Senate. In keeping with the Human Rights Act (1998), should the student choose, the Transfer Appeal Committee's decision and reasoned judgement will be published.
- 4.13. Once a student has completed the College's internal appeals or complaints procedures, the College will issue the student with a Completion of Procedures Letter. If the student is still dissatisfied, the student may direct their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator within three months of the date on which the Completion of Procedures Letter was issued. Information on the complaints covered by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and the review procedures is available at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

5. Conduct of MPhil to PhD Transfer Appeal Committee

- 5.1. Both the student and departmental representative (if attending) will be before the Committee at the same time.
- 5.2. The Committee and the student will be provided with:
 - a. The written appeal and supporting evidence provided by the student;
 - b. A report on the transfer examination(s) clarifying the reasons underlying the decision not to transfer the student's registration to PhD;
 - c. A copy of the student's transfer report;
 - d. Copies of the 6 monthly reports completed by student and supervisor on the student's progress; and
 - e. Copies of any other relevant correspondence relating to the student's research progress to date.
- 5.3. The Chair will explain that Transfer Appeal Committee is only empowered to hear an appeal based on one or more of the grounds set out in paragraph 3.2 and supported by evidence of those grounds.
- 5.4. The Chair will then invite the student to present their case.
- 5.5. The departmental representative is then invited to put questions.

- 5.6. Members of the Committee may address questions to the student.
- 5.7. The departmental representative will then make a statement of the Departmental view.
- 5.8. The student is then invited to put questions.
- 5.9. Members of the Committee may address questions to the departmental representative.
- 5.10. The student is then invited to make any further comments they wish.
- 5.11. The student (and 'friend' if present) and the departmental representative are then asked to withdraw.
- 5.12. The Committee then deliberates and reaches a decision, which is communicated in writing by the clerk to the student.

NB. The above procedures are also applicable to a decision not to transfer an engineering doctoral student's registration from MPhil to EngD.

Approved by Senate
June 2009

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